

# pyramid

STATE PARK

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ILLINOIS STATE PARK

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## THE PARK

Pyramid State Park, consisting of heavily forested hills and many lakes, was formerly used as Southern Illinois University's Pyatts Research Area. In 1965, the state of Illinois bought 1,600 acres and have since increased the acreage to 2,524, including about 135 acres of water. The park is in southwest Illinois about 6 miles southwest of Pinckneyville in Perry County.

Pyramid gets its name from one of the major coal companies in Perry County that was strip mining the land in this area.

## THE LAKES

Over 135 acres of water form lakes varying in size from 24 acres to .01 acre. Many of the smaller ponds go dry during periods of drought. Existing ponds, depending on the amount of rain, may be isolated or at times connected into one body of water as a result of fluctuating water levels.

The majority of the lakes were created by strip-mining operations between 1930 to 1950. The topography is rough, consisting of multiple ridges and cuts resulting from the mining operations. Since many of the lakes can be reached only by foot, Pyramid affords an opportunity for the angler to get away from crowds. Most of the lakes from within Pyramid are old enough that natural vegetation has become established.

A mature hardwood timber consisting of mostly white oak and hickory on the west edge of the park is in an area of about 20 acres which was not strip-mined. Several large stands of conifers were planted years ago and there is a timber cover of cottonwood, box elder and sycamore with some small oak and hickory trees. Songbirds and furbearers including beaver and mink are found along with game animals.

## STRIP MINING

Illinois ranks fourth in the nation in total coal production, but the state is third in production of strip-mined coal, outranked by Kentucky and Ohio.

Although historical accounts vary, the first discovery of coal in the United States is said to have been made by Joliet and Marquette in La-Salle County. Before that time, coal was used by the American Indians, notably by the Pueblo for their pottery-making.

Strip-mining, or open cut mining as we know it today, was developed around 1800. A horse-

drawn scoop removed the top layer of soil and rock, the miners following along the crop line with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows. The open trenches exposed more coal, but increased depth made it progressively more difficult to handle the overlying soil, rock and shale.

That problem was solved by a method first used in Illinois in 1866, when the country's first commercial strip mine was opened near Danville. This system also used horse-drawn equipment, but the top layers of soil and rock were removed by horse-drawn scrapers and hauled out of the mine pit in wagons and wheelbarrows. Kickapoo State Park is built over this area.

**Reclamation:** In 1962 the state's first strip mine reclamation law became effective. Before this, many strip mine operators made an effort to level the land and seed it, often at considerable expense. The most common method of reclamation in the 1930's was tree planting, but this was discouraging as the trees brought no quick economic return.

## FACILITIES

**Picnicking:** Picnic tables and park stoves are in shaded areas around some of the lakes. Toilet facilities are marked on the park map. Major roads are fair weather only.

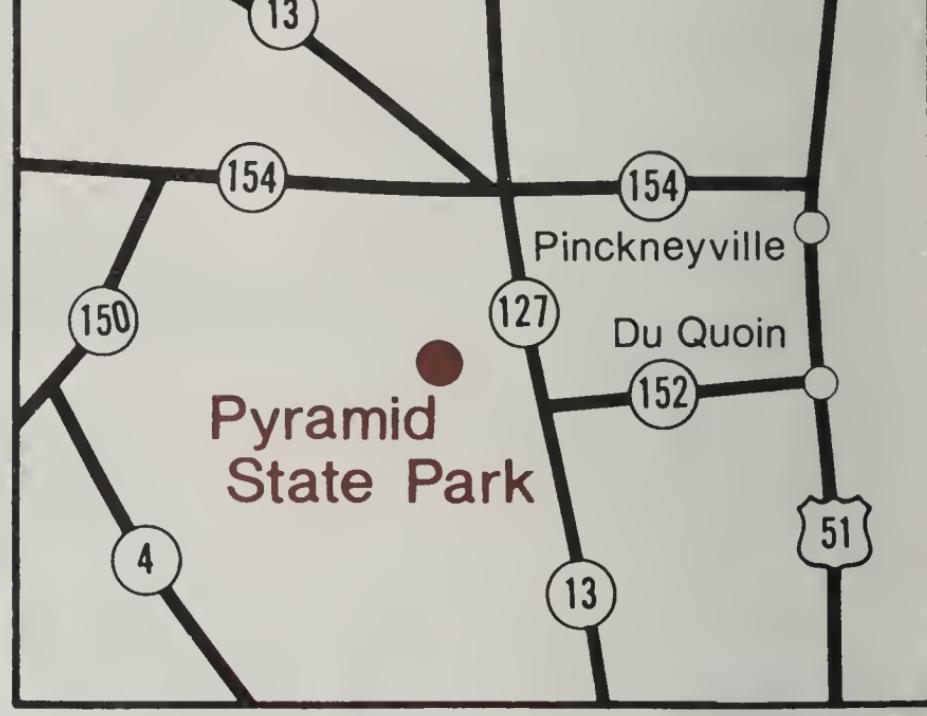
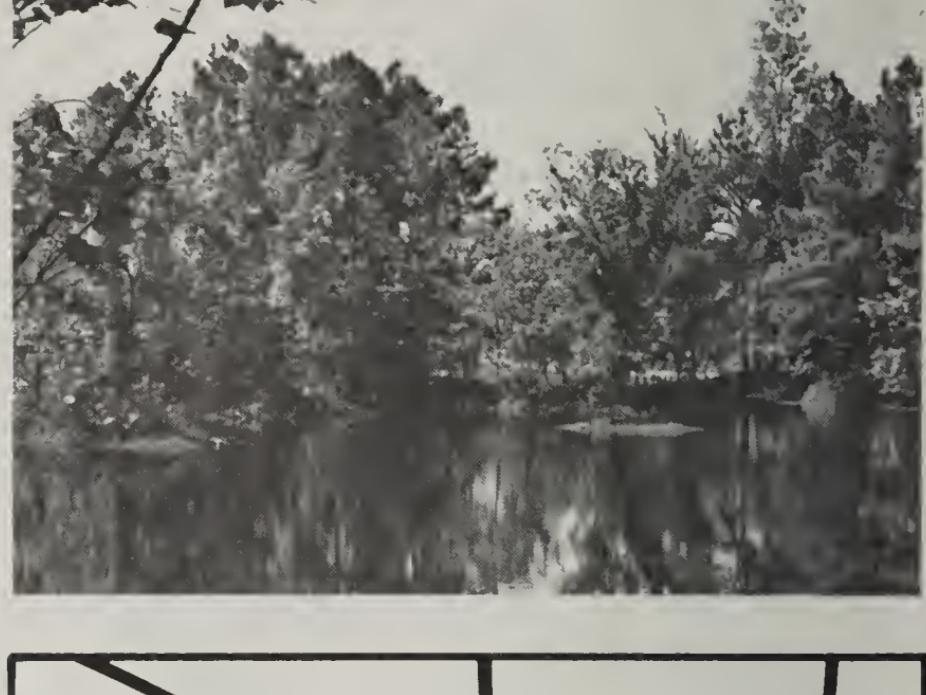
**Trails:** About 15 miles of foot and horse trails wind through the park, including one rugged trail (see map).

**Camping:** Tent and trailer camping is permitted any place on the area where there is vehicular access except along the blacktop road. All campers must obtain a camping permit from the ranger. Group camping is allowed; all groups of over 25 persons must have advance permission from the ranger before entering the park. There is no shower building or trailer dump station.

**Fishing:** Largemouth bass and bluegill are the predominant species. Lost Lake (a hike-in lake) and some of the other lakes contain a hybrid of green sunfish/bluegill. There are also bullhead, channel catfish and redear sunfish in some of the lakes. Canoes are especially popular because of the rough terrain, but boats with 10 hp motors or less are allowed. Electric trolling is practical.

**Boat ramps:** At some of the larger lakes (see map).

**Hunting:** Check with the District Wildlife Biologist for upland game species and hunting dates. The area is open to squirrel, dove, woodcock, pheasant, quail, rabbit and deer (with bow or gun) hunting. There is no waterfowl hunting or trapping.



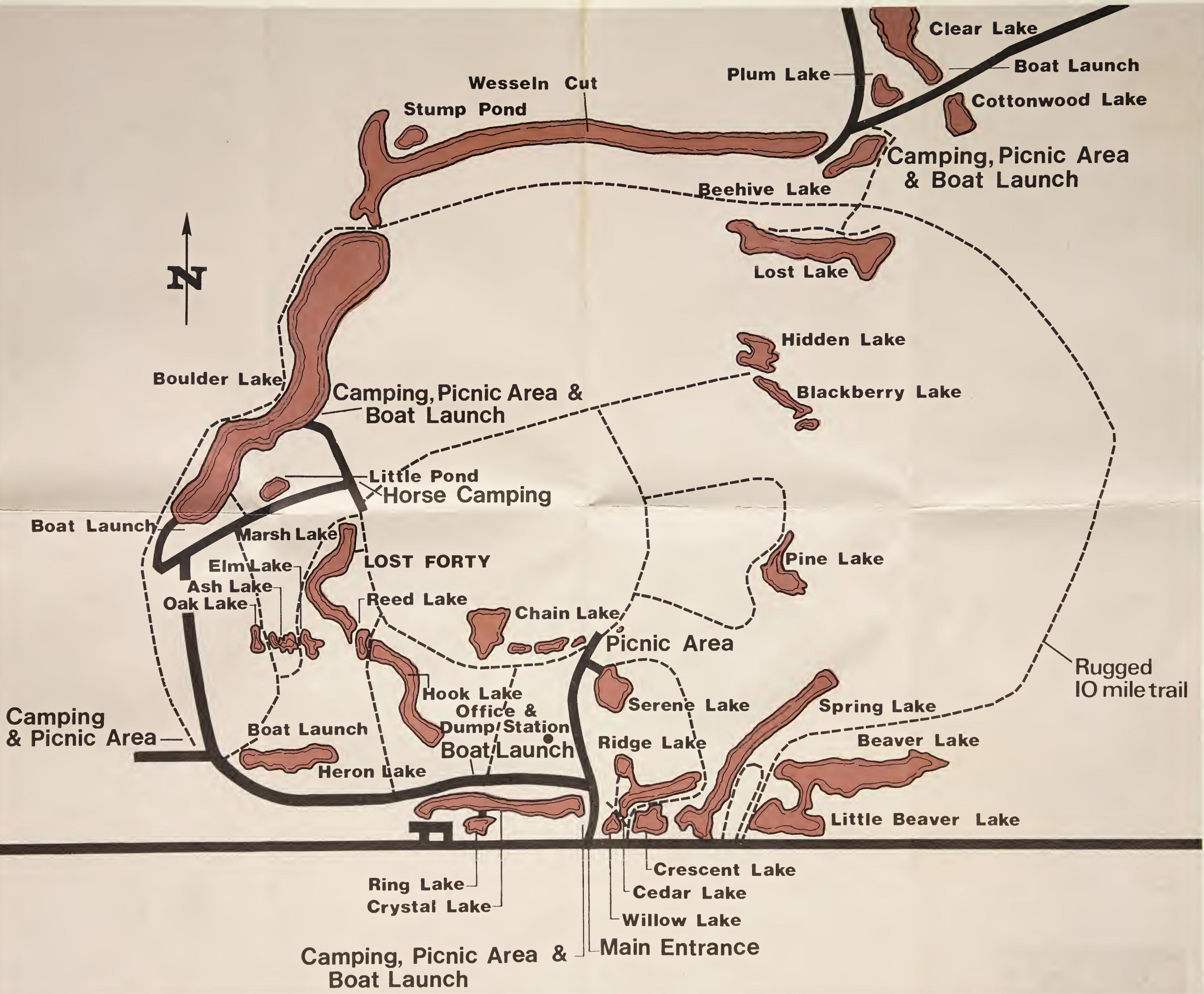
## FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

Admittance will not be granted groups of 25 or more persons to any state park or conservation area unless permission from the park ranger has been secured to use the facilities. It is also required that groups of minors have adequate supervision and that at least one responsible adult accompany each group not exceeding 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state parks and memorials are within easy access of every part of the state. Lodges, cabins and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state parks are open the year round. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of park roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to park facilities is by foot only.

For more details about this site, contact Wildlife Manager, Mt. Vernon Game Farm, Mt. Vernon, 62864, phone 618/242-0830 or Park Ranger, R. R. #1, Box 115-A, Pinckneyville, 62274, phone 618/357-2574. For information on Illinois sites, write the Department of Conservation, Information/Education Division, State Office Building, Springfield, 62706.





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